

2015 Annual Town Report

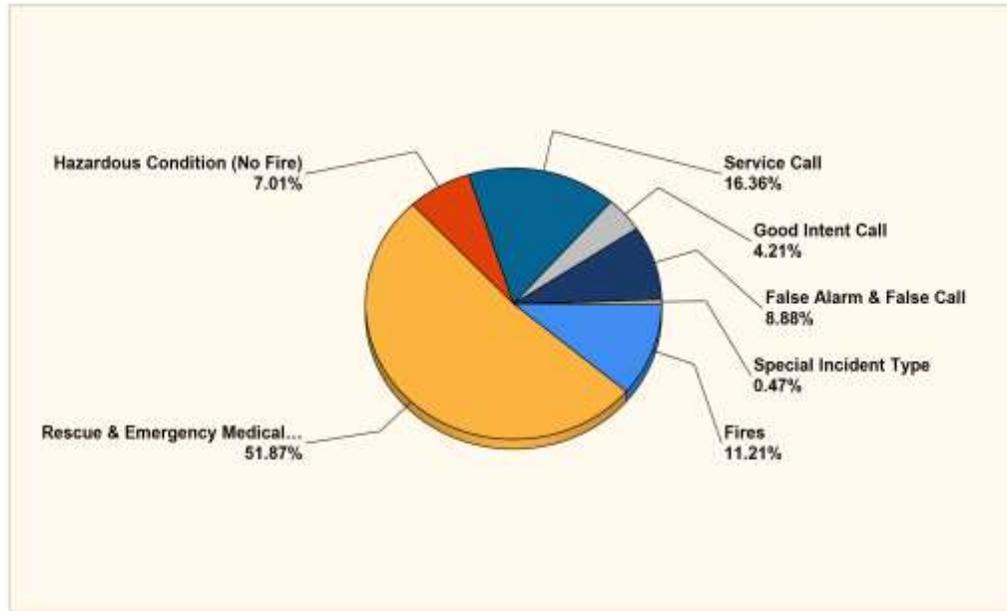


Westhampton Fire Department

Submitted January 14, 2016

2015 Annual Town Report- Westhampton Fire Department

The Westhampton Fire Department had another busy year in 2015 providing emergency services to the community. The Department responded to two-hundred and fourteen calls for service this year. These calls for service were for fire suppression, emergency medical services, hazardous materials response, motor vehicle accidents, utility wires down, residential fire alarm activations, inspections and many more.



2015 emergency calls breakdown

MAJOR INCIDENT TYPE	# INCIDENTS	% of TOTAL
Fires	24	11.21%
Rescue & Emergency Medical Service	111	51.87%
Hazardous Condition (No Fire)	15	7.01%
Service Call	35	16.36%
Good Intent Call	9	4.21%
False Alarm & False Call	19	8.88%
Special Incident Type	1	0.47%

TOTAL 214 100.00%

Department's fleet of apparatus consists of a 2004 Engine, a 1986 Engine, a 1990 garbage truck cab and chassis with a milk truck body converted into a Water Tanker, a 2002 Brush Truck, a 2009 Rescue Truck, a 2009 Mobile Air trailer with a light tower and generator, and a 1996 ambulance. All vehicles are checked by Department personnel on a weekly basis to ensure a state of operational readiness and reliability. In addition, the Town's Highway Department has been a tremendous asset to the Fire Department, completing all routine maintenance, fluid changes, and upkeep of the vehicles. The vehicle maintenance program, as established, helps to prolong the expected life-span of the vehicles and improve the safety during emergency responses. Again this year, we had both Engines professionally pump-tested to ensure adequate pump performance as determined by the manufactures. These testing procedures are also reflected in the Department's Insurance Services Organization (ISO) rating and meet the requirements set by National Standards pertaining to Fire Apparatus. We did budget additional money this year to have the pump on our Engine 2 rebuilt and serviced to prolong the overall life of the entire vehicle and that work has since been completed.



1987 Engine 2

The Department also had all of the fire hose pressure tested to ensure adequate operational effectiveness. National Standards recommend that this is done once a year, and in addition, it is reflected in the ISO ratings that this testing procedure be done to minimize the insurance rates in Town. More important, to ensure the safety of all members utilizing fire hose during operational procedures, it is our responsibility that they are provided with equipment that is safe and functioning to the highest standards. The testing revealed that the Department did have fire hose in service that did not pass the required pressure rating. These were removed from service and replaced with some of the spare hose that was also tested and passed the requirements. These testing requirements demonstrated that this was a project that was needed and should be continued each year to help ensure that the integrity and operational capacity of the equipment is maintained. We also had all of our ground ladders tested to the National Standards, ensuring they could meet the performance requirements during emergency operations. All of these projects are critical to properly maintaining all of the equipment and ensuring the highest degree of safety for our personnel utilizing these resources.

On April 1, 2015, the Westhampton Fire Department began a new chapter in its history by starting up a basic life support (BLS) transport ambulance service. This was the first time in the Town history that the Department began transporting patients. This was a great partnership between the Town which funded a small share of the startup costs and the Westhampton Firefighters Association purchasing the ambulance from the Easthampton Fire Department for \$3,000 and then selling it to the Town for \$1. The new system is now structured so a private ambulance service, Pioneer Valley Ambulance, provides transportation between the hours of midnight and 4PM, and the Westhampton Fire Department provides transportation between the hours of 4PM and midnight. These times allow for the volunteers to get home from work, school, etc. and provide coverage as needed when calls come in. All EMT's will continue to respond 24 hours a day, seven days a week, but will respond in their personal vehicles during those off hours.



1996 Westhampton Ambulance

One of the greatest challenges faced by volunteer departments across the country is the recruitment and retention of Department members. Greater demands on training, increasing call volumes and the balance of a full time job and family all require a delicate balance that can minimize the number of people interested in becoming a member. The Town of Westhampton has been very fortunate over the years, given the difficulties seen by other departments, to maintain this type of department and the high level of performance and services provided by these individuals. The Department currently has thirty-five volunteer members and is always seeking new members to help serve the community. These volunteers are vital to keeping the overall cost for services down while at the same time performing a critical service needed in the community.

Members of the Department are continuing to work with the Elementary School and their staff to deliver public education and fire safety lessons to the Students. This education is done in the form of classroom presentations and demonstrations as well as public education programs at Town events such as the Fall Festival. Our Department continues to be a member of the Hampshire County Fire Defense Association providing us access to a regional public education trailer to assist in the delivery of the fire safety lessons. This continues to be an extremely valuable program and we look forward to our continued collaboration with the school Administration for this purpose.



The Department continues to rely heavily on its website to help with the communications throughout the community. We have transitioned all of our burning permits and inspections to this online forum to make it more convenient for anyone to request or schedule these and get immediate feedback. For a Department that is an all volunteer, we have already seen a dramatic improvement in communication both externally and internally with our members. We hope to continually make improvements such as this in the future to better service all the residents as efficiently as possible.

Last year we worked with the Town Treasurer and Unibank to provide online payments and scheduling for people needing a home smoke and carbon monoxide detector inspection. This year, we added all oil burner inspections and propane inspections to the list enabling all of these companies to log in online and scheduled the inspection and provide payment directly to the Town. This enables all funds to be directly sent on a secure wireless network to the Towns bank account and then generates an email notifying the Department about the need for an inspection.

To access the Department website, please visit www.westhamptonfire.org and you can also visit us on our Facebook page under the Westhampton Fire Department page.

The Department continued providing services for installation of child safety restraint systems. Motor vehicle crashes continue to be a leading cause of injury and death for children under the age of 12. Based on information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), although motor vehicle deaths among children age 12 and under has decreased by 43% in the past decade, still more than 9,000 children age 12 and under have died in crashes in the past decade. The Department has one technician trained to properly install these seats to help continually reduce the number of children becoming injured. Knowing how to use car seats, booster seats, and seat belts along with wearing these no matter how short the trip, will lead to a safer environment for our children. To sign up for this service, simply click on our website and choose a date.

The Department was successful this year in obtaining an Assistance to Firefighters Grant in the amount of \$238,000 for the purchase of a new Tanker Truck. A special Town meeting in September provided an addition \$77,000 for this purchase for an overall amount of \$315,000. These funds will allow the Department to purchase a new Tanker and remove from service a twenty-six year old vehicle that was being utilized for purposes it was not designed. The cab and chassis of this vehicle was originally used as a garbage truck and the body was used as a milk truck. The new Tanker will have greater versatility and capabilities and more importantly provide a safe and reliable vehicle for all of our Firefighters. This new vehicle should be delivered around July 2016.



Department Retro-fitted Tanker Vehicle

The Department received a second Assistance to Firefighters Grant in the amount of \$16,200 for the purchase of new turnout gear for some of our new members. Recently, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has changed their standards for protective clothing for Firefighters. It is now the accepted consensus standard in the fire service that all protective clothing that is being used for fire suppression operations, be manufactured within the last ten years. This grant will help outfit eight of our newer members, and provide us the ability to fund additional protective clothing out of our operational budget and prolong the need to ask the Town for a capital expense on these items. We are very excited about this grant and expect delivery of the new gear around May 2016.

The Town continues to have a mass notification system to alert all Town residents for any emergent needs. This system is called CodeRED and provides the Town the ability to call all landlines, or any other cell phone numbers, text message, or email individuals on the alert. The intent of this type of system is to improve communication prior to a large scale disaster, or weather related event to provide guidance and direction to the community on things such as expectations of power being restored, opening of warming shelters, and items that individuals are expected to have on their own. We have done two test calls with this system with positive feedback from the system and the community as a whole. Anyone can sign up for this system by going to the Department website at www.westhamptonfire.org and click on the CodeRED icon on our homepage.

This past July, Bob Miller stepped down as the Departments EMS Coordinator after overseeing this position since its inception. Bob has been instrumental in numerous advances in emergency medical services within the Town and assisting with the transition to the Town and Department having their own transporting ambulance. Bob continues to respond as a member of the Department on all EMS calls and plays a significant role in all responses and trainings. The Department would like to extend our sincerest thanks to Bob Miller and all of the sacrifices he has made to get the Westhampton EMS service to where it is today.

New members brought on this year were Joe Bykowski. Joe and his family live on Hathaway Road. Joe has a background in the fire service as he was a call Firefighter in the Town of Foxboro prior to moving to Westhampton. We welcome Joe and his family he transitions to our Department and begins his training for both fire and emergency medical services calls.

There are a number of capital projects that the Fire Department is going to need input and support on from the community in the immediate future. The largest of these is a need for a new Public Safety Complex to meet the growing demands of the community. The current facility is reaching sixty years old and no longer is able to accommodate the demands placed on the public safety services (Police, Fire, EMS, and Emergency Management). In addition, one of the Engines is twenty-eight years old and has reached its life expectancy. However, no new Engine available will fit in the current facility given the current size and parameters. The Tanker vehicle is also old and being utilized for operations that it was not designed.



Westhampton Public Safety Complex

All of these items have been forwarded to the Town Capital Improvements Committee with emphasis placed on a new building. We will continue to explore all available funding options to minimize the financial impact on the community, but the conversation needs to continue in order to plan and prepare for vehicles and equipment for the next ten to twenty-five years and a facility that will continue to meet the service demands for the next fifty plus years.

Finally, I'd like to thank all of the personnel at the Department for their continued support and dedication to the Town and the Department. It continues to be an absolute pleasure and honor to work for all of them and be part of an organization that cares so much about their community. The members of the Westhampton Fire Department continue to do much more than respond to emergencies. Throughout the years, they continue to clean residents chimneys each fall, hang the flags on the utility poles in the center of town when needed, get involved in community sponsored events such as the Halloween parade, fill residents swimming pools and the water tanks at the Town Cemetery, install smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors, and put up house numbers for residences to help emergency responders find the proper location and decrease response times. The Westhampton Fire Department is one of the few healthy and vigorous volunteer departments left in the region, and all of the members are very dedicated and proud to serve the residents and community. Thank you and have a safe and healthy year.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christopher W. Norris
Fire Chief